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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for instructing students in the writing process in order to improve their overall writing skills. The targeted population consisted of fourth and fifth grade students in a growing upper middle class community, located in northern Illinois. The writing problems of the students were documented through data revealing lack of use of process writing skills under formal and informal assessments. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students demonstrated a lack of skills related to organization and revision in the writing process. Reviews of instructional strategies revealed a lack of teacher modeling, instruction using literature connections, time provided for student writing, revision, self-assessment, and reflection. A review of solution strategies suggested by authors and researchers resulted in the implementation of new teaching strategies. These included an increase in the time allowed for writing, more teacher modeled demonstrations of writing techniques using six writing traits (organization, ideas, word choice, sentence fluency, voice, and conventions), increased use of literature as examples of good writing, increased use of assessments and reflections, and greater opportunities for a variety of audiences. The results of this action research project showed a marked improvement in student writing for all three sites. Based on the data for improving student writing skills, the students exhibited greater ability to communicate more effectively through their writing at the conclusion of the project. Appendixes contain a writing rubric, final writing reflection, portfolio rubric, literature model, student reflection for portfolio, student self-assessment for portfolio, writing lesson plans, and original data collection scores for each of the three sites. (Contains 48 references, and 10 tables and 12 figures of data.) (Author/RS)

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# IMPROVING STUDENT WRITING IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

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Marilyn Starns

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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Chicago, Illinois

May, 2002

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# ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for instructing students in the writing process in order to improve their overall writing skills. The targeted population consisted of fourth and fifth grade students in a growing upper middle class community, located in northern Illinois. The writing problems of the students were documented through data revealing lack of use of process writing skills under formal and informal assessments.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students demonstrated a lack of skills related to organization and revision in the writing process. Reviews of instructional strategies revealed a lack of teacher modeling, instruction using literature connections, time provided for student writing, revision, self-assessment, and reflection.

A review of solution strategies suggested by authors and researchers resulted in the implementation of new teaching strategies. These included an increase in the time allowed for writing, more teacher modeled demonstrations of writing techniques using six writing traits (organization, ideas, word choice, sentence fluency, voice, and conventions), increased use of literature as examples of good writing, increased use of assessments and reflections, and greater opportunities for a variety of audiences.

The results of this action research project showed a marked improvement in student writing for all three sites. Based on the data for improving student writing skills, the students exhibited greater ability to communicate more effectively through their writing at the conclusion of the project.

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# CHAPTER 1

# PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

## General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted fourth and fifth grade classes exhibited a deficiency in writing skills, which were displayed through a lack of organization and revision. Evidence used to document the existence of the problem included ISAT writing scores, Fifth Grade District Benchmark communication evaluations, teacher assessments and student self-evaluations.

## Immediate Problem Context

The elementary school located in the Fox Valley consisted of suburban and rural living situations. All three of the targeted sites were located in a 30 year-old, multilevel brick structure with four to five sections per grade level, kindergarten through fifth grade. Due to the increase in school population, two mobile units, housing four classrooms, were added to the school site at the beginning of the 2001 school year. Additional classrooms within the main building housed art, music, physical education, a learning resource center, teachers' lounge/workroom, community room/lunch room, nine resource classrooms and a self-contained learning disabilities classroom.

The building staff included a principal, a part time assistant principal, and 25 regular classroom teachers who had various levels of education: 11 Bachelor's degrees, 14 Master's degrees, and 2 Doctoral degrees. Additional certificated staff members included a Special Education classroom teacher, an L.D. teacher, two P.E. teachers, an

Art teacher, a Music teacher, a Band/Orchestra teacher, a Reading Resource teacher and a Learning Center Director. The average number of years of teaching experience for the certificated staff totaled 16.9 years. All teachers were of White descent. Due to the large number of children and the diverse population of the students and their needs, six instruction aides and five inclusion aides were also part of the staff. The need for the inclusion aides had risen from zero to the current number of five in just three years.

The demographics of the school population, based on the district's "2000 State School Report Card," indicated 93.8 % White population, 1.2% Black, 1.9% Hispanic, 2.5% Asian Pacific, and 0.5% Native American. The total population of the school was 566 children. Of the 566 children,1.4% were from low-income housing. Attendance patterns showed 95.8% of the students attended school regularly, a mobility rate of 7.2% and no chronic truancy rate.

Site A was a fourth grade classroom and Sites B and C were fifth grade classrooms.

Site A, a fourth grade classroom, consisted of 24 children, 12 girls and 12 boys. Two students were of Hispanic descent and the remaining students were of White descent. Two students were new to the building that year. Two of the children received L.D. services. One student was diagnosed ADHD and received medication for the condition.

Site B, a fifth grade classroom, consisted of 26 students, 13 girls and 13 boys. Four of the students were new to the building that year. One of the students was Black, one was Asian, one was Eastern Indian, and the remaining students were White. One of the students was diagnosed B.D./ E.D., one child was diagnosed E.D., and one child was

diagnosed L.D. All three students received services from both the L.D. Resource Teacher and the Social Worker.

The other fifth grade classroom, Site C, consisted of 26 children, 10 boys and 16 girls. Twenty-two of the students were White, one was Asian, one was Black, and one was Hispanic. None of the 26 students were new to the building that year. One student received L.D. services and one student received services from both the L.D. Resource teacher and the Social Worker. One student was a Down's syndrome inclusion student. Two students were hearing impaired, one being diabetic and also receiving speech services. One other student also received speech services.

School programs included Woods Club, PTO, Chess Club, Book Fair, Spring Sing, P.E. Night, Band Orchestra, Outdoor Education, Ski Night, Art Fair, Literature Festival, AVIC, Junior Great Books, Student Council, Sock Hop and Math Night.

## The Surrounding Community

The site building was located in an area that at one time was a small river town but, over the last twenty years, has seen tremendous growth, particularly in the last ten years. Growth continued at a rapid rate and all the schools in the district built additions and some installed mobile units.

The following demographic information was taken from the "2000 State School Report Card." The socioeconomic status of the general population consisted of a combination of upper echelon, middle class and low income residents. The low income residents formed 4.5% of the population. Per capita and/or median family income in this community whose population was 22,501 was $20,794.00 with a median household income of $46,655.00. This allowed for an expenditure of $6,782.00 per student, funded

primarily through property taxes. This was 5% less than the state average. Residents of the community came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Residents of Hispanic descent numbered 1,535, or 5.5 % of the population. White residents numbered 26,384, or 94.58%. Black residents numbered 518, which accounted for 1.86% of the population while the Native American population accounted for .37%, or 104 residents. Asian Pacific Islander residents numbered 603 and accounted for 2.16% of the population. The remainder of the population consisted of 569 residents of other race origins and accounted for 2.04% of the population.

The school was part of a unit district with 11,140 students. The district had ten elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools and one special education building. Total number of district classroom teachers was 585 with 99.8% White and 0.2% Hispanic. Their professional characteristics revealed 13.9 years of experience with 36% obtaining a Bachelor's degree and 64% obtaining a Master's degree.

## The National Context

Student writing has generated concern at the national and state levels for many years. At the national level, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has conducted five writing assessments since 1969. At the state level, Illinois as well as other states had developed tests to assess student achievement in writing.

Prior to the creation of the assessments, Illinois developed the Illinois Learning Standards, which included goals for writing that were outlined in the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) article "Illinois Learning Standards" (200l). In addition, researchers in the classroom began focusing on writing improvement in the 1980's (Graves, 1983;

Calkins, 1986) and continue to investigate ways to help students improve their writing skills (Graves, 1994; Fox, 1993; Atwell, 1998; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

The report, Writing Framework and Specifications for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress, pointed out that the NAEP began writing assessments in 1969 and conducted five assessments nation wide with the last conducted in the 1998. The NAEP1992 Trends in Academic Progress (Mullis et al.) showed few changes in writing achievement for fourth, eighth, and eleventh grade between 1984 and 1992. In their study, Goldstein and Carr (1996) pointed out that students who did demonstrate improvement were those who had used some if not all of the strategies of process writing. The NAEP1998 Writing Report Card Highlights on these assessments showed similar improvement for students who planned and revised their writing and who often spoke to their teachers about their writing. This 1998 report also stated that only 23% of fourth graders, 27% of eighth graders, and 22% of twelvth graders were at or above the "proficient" level for writing - the level identified by the National Assessment Governing Board as the standard that all students should reach.

Writing improvement had also been a focus at state levels. In Kentucky, the Education for Reform Act mandated changes in the teaching and assessments of student writing (Bridge, Compton-Hall, & Cantrell, 1997). Bridge et al. found these changes included a focus on process writing and showed major improvements in student performance from 1982 to1995. Vermont conducted a similar study to determine the effect of a state mandated program of portfolio assessments of student writing. The study showed improvement in both teacher instruction and student writing (Bridge et al.).

The ISBE in their article, "Illinois Learning Standards" (2001) states "Illinois provided a model for the nation a dozen years ago when it adopted *34 State Goals for Learning* in 1985." These were the beginning of what was to become the Illinois Learning Standards adopted in 1997. In "Frequently Asked Questions"(2001) the ISBE pointed out that the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) are based solely on Illinois Learning Standards, include writing assessments for third, fourth and eighth graders and were developed by Illinois teachers and districts curriculum and assessment directors in cooperation with MertriTech, Inc. Information from the ISBE "Assessment 1999-2000 ISAT scores" (2001) showed the following results for 1999 and 2000. For third graders only 56% in 1999 and 55% in 2000 met or exceeded the standards for writing. Fifth graders performed better with 75% in 1999 and 71% in 2000 meeting or exceeding the standards. Eighth graders showed improvement from 1999 to 2000 by increasing from 59% to 70% meeting or exceeding standards. Tenth graders took the test in 1999 only and 66% of the students performed at or above standards. These results indicated an inconsistency across grade levels.

In the 1980s Donald Graves (1983), Lucy McCormick Calkins (1986) and others researched the importance of helping students develop the process writing skills and strategies needed to become better writers. Nancie Atwell's work in 1987 reflected the same ideas, and she continued to improve on these theories in 1994 when she returned to the classroom (1998). Mem Fox, a noted author and professor, also points out the need for writing instruction that focuses on giving children time to write and reflect on their writing (1993). Fountas and Pinnell (2001) took many of Atwell's ideas and expanded

on what they considered important components for improving student writing in writer's workshop.

All of these researchers believed in the importance of improving student writing by providing instruction on the entire process of writing. Instruction should include pre-writing, writing, revision, and reflection strategies.

This interest by national and state Boards of Education and researchers in the field showed that improving writing is a continuing goal for the nation's educators and students.

# CHAPTER 2

# PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

## Problem Evidence

Student writing has been a focus in Illinois schools since the early 1980s. It became a major area of concentration when the state developed standards and tests to evaluate student performance in the writing area. Process writing was taught at all grade levels of the targeted elementary school before the state developed these standards and tests. During the 2000-2001 school year, writing became a topic to revisit.

In February 2000 the third and fifth grade students in the targeted school took ISAT tests in the areas of reading, mathematics, and writing. The district "2000 State Report Card" pointed out that in the writing area only 58% of third grade students met or exceeded state performance standards, compared to 90% of fifth grade students. As a consequence of these test results, the school improvement goal was revised to include improving the written communication skills of all students. The third grade students who took those ISATs were students in two of the targeted sites at the school.

The elementary school made some initial changes in the writing program during the 2000-2001 school year, which included in-service teacher training using a six-trait assessment rubric which teachers began using in their classrooms. The school also purchased numerous books to assist teachers in rethinking their writing program. The number of changes made to any classroom writing program varied from teacher to teacher.

In April 2001 the fifth grade students of the targeted school were given a district benchmark assessment with two pieces that were evaluated in the area of communicating effectively in writing. The writing pieces were a procedural format and a persuasive letter. Results of these assessments are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Fifth Grade Benchmark Assessments

| | Communicates Effectively Standard | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fifth Grades | 0-8 Points Below | 9-10 Points Meets | 11-12 Points Exceeds |
| Classroom 1 Average | 8.76 | | |
| Classroom 2 Average | 8.70 | | |
| Classroom 3 Average | | 9.00 | |
| Classroom 4 Average | | 9.30 | |

These scores showed that two classrooms performed below standard and two classrooms met the standard. When all the scores were averaged, the entire class performed at 8.94 points, which was just below standard. The data indicated that writing instruction still needed to be improved at the targeted school.

At the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year, students in all three sites were required to produce a baseline writing piece. Students wrote the piece prior to any writing instruction from the action research teachers. Students completed this writing assignment independently during class time. The teachers from Sites A, B, and C scored their work using a weighted rubric (see Appendix A). The sites' results are shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

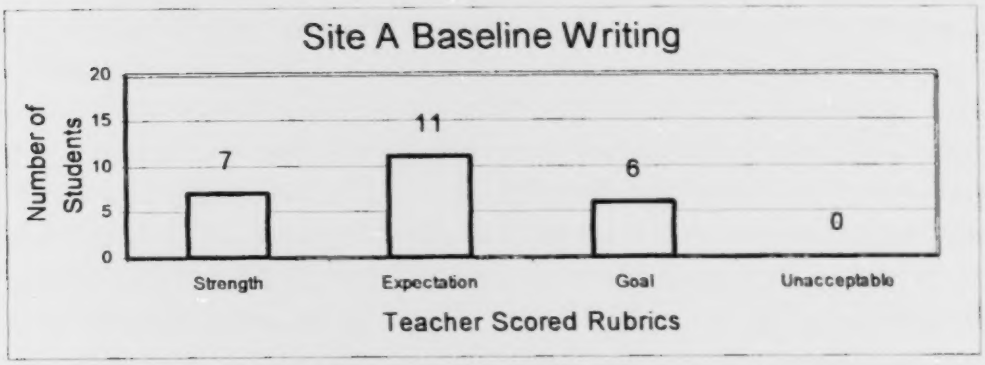


Figure 1. Site A baseline writing results using teacher-scored rubrics.

Site A baseline writing came from a classroom that consisted of 24 fourth grade students. Of the 24 students, only 7 scored within the area of strength. Eleven students scored in the area of expectation and 6 students, 25% of the class, scored below the acceptable level of expectation.

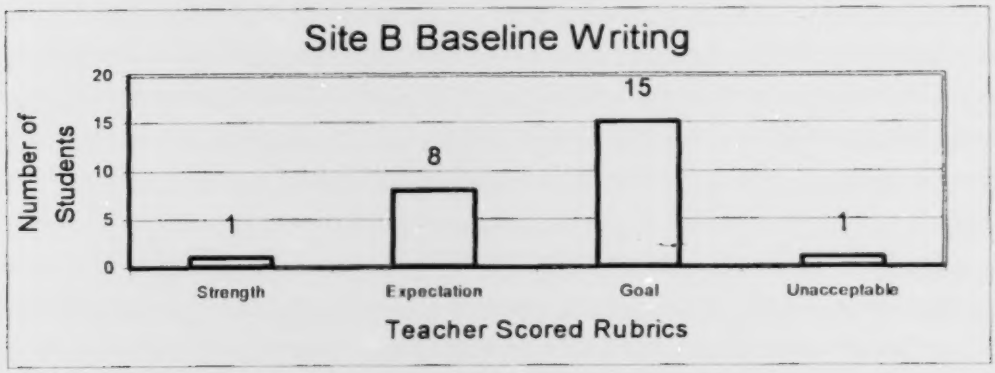


Figure 2. Site B baseline writing results using teacher-scored rubrics.

Site B came from a classroom that consisted of 26 fifth grade students, with 25 participating in the writing project. Of the 25 students, only 1 scored within the area of strength. Eight students scored in the area of expectation, 15 students scored in the area of goal for improvement, and 1 student's piece was scored as unacceptable. This data

reflects that 64% of the students in this site scored below the acceptable level of expectation.

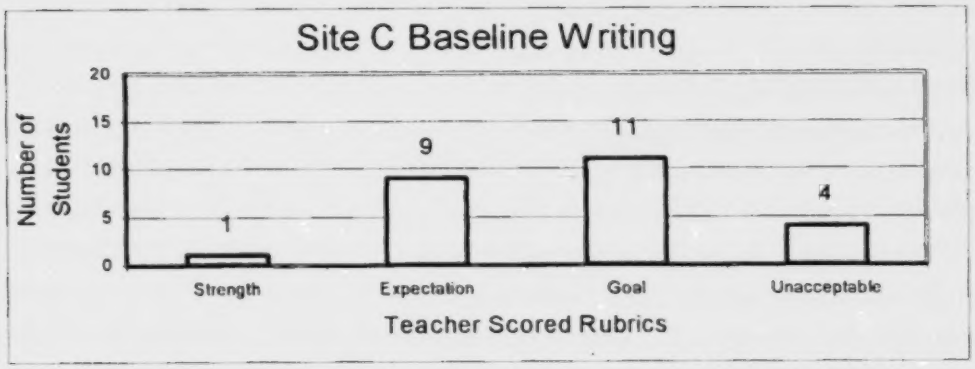


Figure 3. Site C baseline writing results using teacher-scored rubrics.

Site C writing came from a classroom that consisted of 26 fifth grade students; however only 25 students were participants in the action research project. The student identified with Down syndrome was not included in the study because she received writing instruction based on her IEP. Of the 25 students, only 1 scored in the area of strength. Nine students scored in the area of expectation, 11 scored in the area of goal of improvement, and 4 students' work was considered unacceptable. This data reflects that 60% of the students in this site scored below the level of expectation.

The combination of the ISAT scores, the benchmark scores, and the baseline writing samples indicated a need for improving writing instruction in the targeted sites.

## Probable Causes

Process writing has been taught at all three sites in the targeted elementary school for many years. The techniques, time allotment, and assessment tools used varied from teacher to teacher. The teachers, like those in the study by Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron (2000), had adopted and adapted writing instruction in different ways.

Researchers have found students were not given enough time during the school day to practice the writing process. Developing writing skills required time and instruction from educators. In a study done by Miller and Meece (1997) they found that teachers were consumed with the responsibility of teaching specific skills. They also found those same teachers were concerned with instructional practices that focused on skills that were seen on various norm and criterion-referenced tests. In this study teachers readily admitted to feeling compelled to stress certain curriculum content. The researchers found cites in the study that revealed teachers felt that, because of time constraints, students were not given ample opportunity to develop ideas, revise their writing, or even to edit their writing because time was allocated to other academic expectations.

Fletcher and Portalupi (1998) found that just as children reached an age where they were more able to develop their writing skills and to accept more challenging writing assignments, they were seldom given the opportunity to do so. They felt that students in upper elementary grades and those in junior high were faced with growing pressure to develop their knowledge and competency in subjects such as math, reading, and language arts. Fletcher and Portalupi pointed out that teachers, in an attempt to help students achieve a level of proficiency in those subject areas, often sacrificed time for writers' workshop.

Researchers have shown that another problem has been lack of teacher modeling during writing lessons and writing workshops. Teachers have been giving writing assignments without actually demonstrating the writing process. In fact, "when students aren't learning, it's because the demonstrations we are giving, or not giving, are not



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adequate and/or are seen as not meaningful or necessary to the learner" (Routman, 1994, p. 11). Moreover, students needed to have writing modeled for them in authentic situations. "Students can go a lifetime and never see another person write, much less show them how to write" (Graves, 1994, p. 109).

Another area of concern has been that the language arts curriculum in the targeted school did not specifically encourage them to look at literature as a tool to teach writing. In addition, teachers had been "reluctant to focus on literature as a means of helping students" (Harwayne, 1992, p. 60). Many teachers believed that fourth and fifth grade students should read only chapter books, and that shorter picture books were for younger children. When students modeled their writing after novels of 200 pages or more, "a close look at these students' fiction show[ed] that they often choose a cast of characters and plot that require[d] far more pages to develop than they [were] prepared to write. It's no wonder [teachers] struggle[d] to help them shoehorn these stories into a mere ten or twelve pages" (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998, p. 76). Fletcher and Portalupi recommended using shorter picture books to model story development.

Assessment could also be problematic for both students and teachers. Many teachers felt that creative writing was impossible to grade; grading was subjective and unfair, and there was no way to accurately monitor growth and progress (Essex, 1996). Student self-efficacy was also influenced by assessments. "By far the strongest source of self-efficacy information . . . is that which students obtain from interpreted results of their efforts" (Parajes & Valante, 1997, para. 3). This suggested the importance of teacher and student involvement in an assessment process.

The focus of assessment was equally important. Isaacson (1988) noted that "Although educators always have evaluated student writing, they seldom have done so in ways that guide instruction in the writing process or reflect all facets of the writing product." Another study noted that students were not comfortable with formative evaluation because they seldom had any feedback on their writing other than summative assessments (Wilcox, Anstead & Black, 1997). Too often assessments focused on correcting only the mechanics of the piece. Due partly to textbooks and partly to instructional practices, students saw revision as just correcting mistakes and not rethinking their work (Lehr, 1995). One strategy used by teachers for writing assessment was the portfolio. However, Jamentz (1994) pointed out that if teachers and students did not use the portfolio effectively to evaluate what students knew and needed to learn, it became nothing more than a folder filled with work. In the researchers' sites, portfolios were used in the classrooms for assessment, but were most frequently collections of student work used for summative evaluation only and did not contain student self-evaluations or reflections.

Students' lack of involvement in the assessment of their writing has been identified in the literature as another problem. Graves (1994) believed that student participation in assessment of their own work was essential to effective writing. "For aeons [sic] learners of all ages have passed their work on to someone else without participating in the process themselves" (Graves, 1994, p.112). This was very evident in writing done for testing purposes. In a study done by Freedman (1995) it was shown that students were much less motivated to write for exams than for writing done in class for exchange purposes. Freedman felt that writing for exams took ownership and evaluation



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away from students, and teachers and gave it, instead, to a distant examiner. The quality of the writing produced was adversely affected. In the researchers' targeted sites teachers often assigned writing for assessment purposes. Both teachers and students used rubrics to evaluate these pieces, but these rubrics were used for a final grade, not to help students re-evaluate or rethink their writing.

Improving process writing skills was an important issue for the teacher-researchers. Many factors were involved, including (1) writing time, (2) proper modeling by teachers, (3) effective assessments, and (4) literature connections. All of these factors needed to be addressed in order to establish a more successful writing program in the targeted sites of this action research project.

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# CHAPTER 3

# THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Literature Review

Many strategies have been used to improve student writing. Researchers have stressed the importance of instruction that includes ample time for writing and revision, authentic assessment, connections to literature, and effective modeling on the writing process.

Any skill requires time to practice, reinforce, and refine. Writing skills are no different and, therefore, good writers require time to practice their writing skills. Writing is a craft and, as such, necessitates an opportunity to develop (Sejnost & Thiese, 2001). Fountas and Pinnell (2001) felt children needed to be given the chance to write every day for an hour, and if 5 days a week were not possible, 4 were acceptable. They said asking children who were not experienced writers to finish a piece of writing they had not worked with for a few days was not advisable. They believed children should write daily, just as they read daily. Urging teachers to reevaluate the amount of time allowed for writing, Graves (1994) suggested that children be given at least 4 days a week when they could write.

Time should also be provided for children to revise their writing. Revision is essential to the writing process. Townsend, Fu, and Lamme (1998) pointed out that revision was the vehicle through which writers sorted out their words and thoughts. They said that only when writers molded and remolded their words and ideas could they then

understand their writing. They found that writers took this new understanding with them as they wrote again. When children understood the language of writing traits, they had a foundation for which to revise their writing (Spandel, 2001).

The writing process has always been considered a series of steps. The beginning step was the formation of ideas. Harwayne (1992) found that a writer's notebook provided a place to collect those ideas. This notebook was a blank book a person filled with thoughts. These thoughts could be a great basis for story development. The student should think of these notebooks as a container to hold their thoughts, questions, poems, anecdotes, or narrative pieces. A writer's notebook allowed children an opportunity to write about anything at anytime, and this freedom to express their thoughts encouraged writing. The use of a writer's notebook gave children a place to write about their feelings, and Fletcher (1996) believed it allowed them to be writers, not just during the school day, but any time of the day.

In order for children to be good writers, they have to understand the writing process and be comfortable with the various stages or phases of the process. Rewriting, revising, and editing are among the concepts included in this process, and it is difficult for children to be good writers without including all these traits in their writing. The writing process, recursive by nature, is a series of stages and phases building upon one another (Spandel, 2001). These phases have to be repeated over and over until the desired end is met. None of these stages or phases can be ignored. All the phases are a necessary step in reaching the overall product (Spandel).

Graves (1994) found that modeling was important and, like any craft, had to be demonstrated to learners from the first step of choosing the topic to finishing a final draft.



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Teachers needed to be writing models for their students. They had to allow their students to see that they also struggled through the writing process (Routman, 1994). Further, teachers had to write with their students, to demonstrate that writing was not simply something that adults made students do. They had to be ready to share their writing as often as they asked students to share. Preferably teachers should have shared their least successful writing pieces to demonstrate that adults aren't always successful and allow students the opportunity to give revision suggestions (Hewitt, 2001). By writing in front of students, teachers demonstrated how they planned, changed their mind, confronted problems, weighed options, made decisions, and used conventions to improve their writing (Atwell, 1998). Whether the students were 5 or12 years old, they all needed to see writing demonstrated. To create powerful classroom environments in which all children learned to write, teachers needed to be concerned with modeling the writing process (Cunningham & Allington, 1999).

Harwayne (1992) recommended that teachers use literature to teach writing skills to students since it provided an opportunity to study the techniques and skills used by good writers. Literature should certainly play a key role in writing workshops. By encouraging the study of literature, students understand writing as a series of intentional, decisive moves made by the author, like a craftsperson working toward a final product. (Woodray, 1999). Essex (1996) found when students had an opportunity to read or listen to stories and participate in post-reading discussions, they began to see differences and similarities between writing styles and content. Moreover, they began to understand story organization and structure. It was important that teachers used picture books in upper-grade writing workshops. If you took away the illustrations, what remained was a text

very much the length students should write. This model provided the scope of plot and character development that helped beginning writers create their own stories (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). Students should be required to write in a variety of genres, so it was important that the reading/writing connection included a wide range of literature models, including factual texts (Wray & Lewis, 1997). Providing this variety of text models was important. "Teachers...need[ed] to attend to issues of genre as they chose books for read alouds, [made] decisions about texts to model in whole group writing activities, and support[ed] children's efforts at writing for a variety of purposes" (Donovan, 2001, p. 437).

Assessment of writing was another major component of writing instruction in classrooms. Woodray (1999) believed that teachers' responsive assessments sent very strong messages, so it was critical that teachers thought carefully and specifically about what they were looking for as they assessed student's writing. Graves (1994) pointed out that "teachers do have an important role in evaluation, but it consists primarily of helping children become part of the process." Other researchers pointed to the importance of student involvement in the assessment process. Routman (1994) felt that writing assessment helped students grow as writers only if students learned to monitor and evaluate their own work. "Good writing occurs when students participate in the assessment process, recognizing their own strengths and needs" (Glazer & Brown, 1993, p. 85). Teachers needed to act as coaches, not judges, so that students became more involved in the process by setting the criteria and goals for their work (Townsend, Fu, & Lamme, 1997). Sperling (1993) pointed out that assessments with criteria developed through collaboration of the teacher and the students required considerable work but was



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worth the effort. She said because students were part of the process they took responsibility for refining and improving their work.

Two strategies that have been used to help students become involved in assessment are rubrics and reflections. Using rubrics to assess writing helped students examine criteria and set goals (Brualdi, 1998). Spandel (2001) believed that using her six-trait assessment rubric could "make a difference in students' writing performance not only at the classroom level but on large-scale measures of writing proficiency." She also felt that "learning to look deep within (for that's what assessment is, after all) [was] essential not only to students' understanding of their own writing, but to the very act of writing itself." Teaching students to reflect on their writing helped them think more critically about their work. In a study done by Underwood in 1998, the findings seemed to support the idea that students who were instructed in reflective analysis by using reflective questions and reflective events became more aware of challenges faced by writers.

Using portfolios was another strategy used to improve student writing. Portfolios helped teachers capture moments when students were working at their best (Abruscato, 1993). "The portfolio is a record of the child's process of learning: what the child has learned and how she has gone about learning" (Grace, 1992, p. 3). It was important that students take ownership of the portfolio. "The process of assembling a portfolio can help develop student self-reflection, critical thinking, responsibility for learning, and content area skills" (Arter et al., 1995, p.1). It was suggested that students have two portfolios – the working portfolio and the assessment portfolio. The working portfolio was

maintained by the student and usually contained all their writing pieces (Graves, 1994, p.171). The assessment portfolio contained material selected for outside assessment and, if the student made the selections, it encouraged reflection (Hewitt, 2001). Researchers agreed that the process of self-reflection was an important piece of the portfolio product (Arter, 1995; Graves, 1994; Underwood, 1998). Forgette-Girouz and Simon (2000) believed portfolio assessment empowered students when they were involved in deciding the "format, access and storage, and their reflections on, and determination of their level of competency." Portfolios promoted a shared approach between teacher and student to make decisions and allowed teachers "to expand the classroom horizon and enlarge each child's canvas" (Grace, 1992, p. 1).

Also found in the literature was another aspect for improving student writing, providing an effective audience. The audience was the writer's stimulus and gave purpose to the writing (Simic, 1993). In order to use ideas or suggestions from the teacher or classmates, writers needed to work in a classroom that rewarded risk and reflection (Townsend et al., 1997). Graves (1994) suggested that when time was set aside for sharing students' writing it could include talk about practices that worked and those that didn't, and discussion about various aspects of the piece. Graves felt this reaffirmed the essential conditions for writing – experimentation and learning. "Being a part of a community of writers who are struggling to share their voices makes all students feel valued" (Townsend et al., para. 16). Reising (1997) suggested a variety of audiences to assist in evaluating writing. He felt parents, other teachers, other students, and even contest judges could provide assistance in helping students develop and improve their writing.

Implementing these strategies in the targeted sites of this action research project was an attempt to improve the writing skills of the fourth and fifth grade students. The teacher researchers involved in the project adjusted their process writing instruction in terms of time allotment, modeling procedures, literature connections, and assessments. The following objectives and process statements, action plan, and methods of assessment were developed in the summer of 2001 for implementation of the action research in the fall of 2001.

## Objectives and Process Statements

Solutions suggested by researchers combined with an analysis of the site resulted in the following objective:

As a result of writing instruction, during the period of September 2001 to December 2001, the students in the targeted fourth and fifth grade classes will improve writing skills, as measured by teacher assessment, student self-assessments, and student reflections.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Establish writer's workshop to take place four or five days a week for 45 to 60 minutes to provide sufficient time for students to be engaged in the writing process.
2. Provide weekly teacher modeling of writing skills during writer's workshop using whole group instruction.
3. Provide weekly opportunities for students to analyze literature from a writer's perspective using whole group instruction.



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4. Introduce the use of periodic student self-assessment, reflection, and assessment portfolio to evaluate student's progress and growth.
5. Provide a variety of audiences for student writing.

## Action Plan

The action plan for the research project was designed to include strategies to improve student writing skills in the targeted fourth and fifth grades. The first week of the school year was used to acquaint the researchers with each of their targeted groups.

Week 1

A. Introduce writer's workshop time and structure – reading, - mini-lesson, writing, sharing.
B. Give students baseline writing assignment.
C. Have students self-assess writing assignment using teacher developed rubric with Spandel characteristics.
D. Teacher assesses writing piece using teacher-developed rubric with Spandel characteristics.
E. Students write reflection on writing piece.

Week 2

A. Introduce writer's notebook and have students bring self-selected notebook to school.
B. Read The Writer's Notebook by R. Fletcher and discuss with students.
C. Students begin using their own notebooks.

D. Establish use of rough draft notebook and working portfolio folder for collection of student materials.

Week 3

A. Review the idea trait of the Spandel Rubric.

B. Read literature that illustrates good and/or different idea development.

C. Mini-lesson/idea development

D. Teacher models writing and revising for ideas in front of class.

E. Students write rough drafts and revise for idea development.

F. Students evaluate writing using idea section of Spadnel Rubric.

G. Students write reflections about the idea revision process.

Week 4

A. Review the organization trait of the Spandel Rubric

B. Teacher introduces different graphic organizers that can be utilized for organization.

C. Read literature that exposes students to different ways to organize writing.

D. Teacher models use of organizers and demonstrates writing using the organizer.

E. Teacher models revision based on the organization section of the Spandel Rubric.

F. Students us a graphic organizer, write, share and revise a piece and then evaluate it based on the organization section of the Spandel Rubric.

G. Students reflect on the organization process of their writing.

Week 5

A. Review the word choice trait of the Spandel Rubric.

B. Read literature that illustrates good word choice.

C. Mini-lesson/word choice.

D. Teacher models writing and revising for word choice.

E. Students write rough drafts and revise for word choice, share and evaluate piece using the word choice section of the Spandel Rubric.

F. Students write reflections about the word choice process and their writing.

Week 6

A. Review the sentence fluency trait of the Spendel Rubric.

B. Read literature that illustrates good sentence fluency.

C. Mini-lesson/sentence fluency.

D. Teacher models writing and revising the sentence fluency.

E. Students write rough drafts and revise for sentence fluency, share and evaluate piece using the sentence fluency section of the Spandel Rubric.

F. Students write reflections about the sentence fluency process and their writing.

Week 7

A. Review the voice trait of the Spandel Rubric.

B. Read literature that illustrates different authors and their use of voice.

C. Mini-lesson/voice.

D. Teacher models writing and revising for voice.



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E. Students write rough drafts and revise for voice, share and evaluate piece using the voice section of the Spandel Rubric.

F. Students write reflections about using voice and their writing.

Week 8

A. Review the conventions trait of the Spandel Rubric.

B. Demonstrate use of dictionaries, Writers Express, and room posters to help with editing for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and capitalization.

C. Mini-lesson/conventions.

D. Teacher models writing and revising for conventions.

E. Students write rough drafts and edit conventions, share and evaluate piece using the conventions section of the Spandel Rubric.

F. Students write reflections about the editing process and their writing.

Week 9

A. Students select pieces to include in ther assessment portfoliio.

B. Students write reflections for portfolio pieces.

C. Students use checklist to compile portfolio.

D. Teacher and students evaluate portfolios using rubrics.

Week 10

A. Students select one piece from their collection to publish and present to class with added dimentions of artwork, music, movement, drama, or other form of expression.

B. Students assess final piece using teacher-developed rubric with Spandel characteristics.

C. Students reflect on final piece.

D. Teacher assesses final piece using teacher-developed rubric with Spandel characteristics.

## Methods of Assessment

Four major methods of assessment will be used to measure the effects of the action plan. These methods will include (1) teacher scored rubrics (see Appendix A), (2) student scored rubrics (see Appendix A), (3) student reflections (see Appendix B), and (4) portfolio rubrics (see Appendix C). These methods will be used at the beginning and at the conclusion of the action plan.

The teacher scored rubrics are designed to evaluate a piece of student writing based on six characteristics included in the Spandel Rubric. The students will write a baseline piece the first week of the project and a final piece near the end of the project. Both pieces will be scored with the same rubric for comparison purposes.

Students self-assessed the baseline and final pieces of writing using the same rubric as the teacher. These rubrics will be used to compare student self-assessment skills. In addition, the students will do a reflection for both of these pieces. Reflections will be used to compare student thoughts before implementation of the action plan and after the project is completed. These reflections will also be used to measure changes in student use of process writing techniques.

The student and the teacher will do the portfolio rubric upon completion of the student assessment portfolios. The rubric is designed to assess student performance on work done during the course of the project. Artifacts in the portfolio will include items demonstrating student progress in process writing and reflection about each artifact.



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# CHAPTER 4

# PROJECTS RESULTS

## Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve student writing. Five processes were implemented to improve student skills. The strategies used included (1) establishing sufficient writing time, (2) analyzing literature for writing techniques, (3) modeling of skills by the teacher, (4) providing different audiences for student writing, and (5) introducing assessment and reflection practices. Student and teacher assessments and student reflections were used to analyze improvement of six different writing skills. The six writing skills assessed were (1) idea development, (2) organization, (3) word choice, (4) voice, (5) sentence fluency, and (6) use of conventions. The intervention processes were established during the second week of the school year and were maintained during the first semester.

Providing sufficient time for the writing process was paramount. The original plans called for 10 weeks of intervention, but by the third week, the time frame was increased to 13 weeks. The students were engaged in writer's workshop for 45 to 60 minutes 4 or 5 days per week to provide ample time. This time allowance was necessary in order to provide time for all of the interventions.

Analyzing literature was an important intervention used for instruction. Teachers read and discussed numerous picture books with their classes. These books helped students discover and evaluate the different writing techniques used by various authors.

Books were selected for use with each of the six writing skills. See Appendix D for a list of the books used for this instruction. Whole group instruction in this manner allowed students to analyze literature from a writer's perspective.

Modeling of writing was another process implemented by the teachers. Numerous methods were used to demonstrate writing skills. Teachers wrote in their own notebooks when students wrote and used their own writing to demonstrate mistakes and corrections. Often overhead and camera devices were used to project teacher writing onto screens for students to view. This technique allowed students to see the development of a writing piece and how it could be transformed when edited and revised. Students were also encouraged to show their writing using these projection devices. Large sheet and chart paper was also used to demonstrate writing skills and techniques. Teachers shared their writing with the class and encouraged student comments, suggestions, and assessments.

Providing audiences for student writing was an integral part of the process. Teachers integrated various opportunities for students to share their writing. Reading stories aloud to the whole class was one method as was reading to a peer or small group. Students were encouraged to ask for advice and suggestions after reading. Conferencing with the teacher was another strategy used to help give students an audience and provide feedback. Publishing of student pieces expanded audiences for the students and could include parents or others outside the classroom.

Introducing students to assessment and reflections practices was an important strategy used to help students learn writing skills. The baseline and final writing pieces written by students were assessed using student and teacher assessment rubrics and student reflections (see Appendices A and B). To help students better understand these

rubrics and reflections, weekly assessment and reflection sheets were introduced and used by students. Since teachers focused on one of the six writing skills per week, a self-assessment sheet and reflection page was used for each trait to help students evaluate their writing (see Appendices E and F). Students also assembled portfolios of their work that included writing pieces done during the project, weekly self-assessments, and weekly reflections. Teachers and students assessed these portfolios together using a rubric (see Appendix C).

Teachers focused on six skills to improve student writing. Using the five interventions for each skill, teachers hoped to see an overall improvement in student writing. Sample lesson plans for each of the traits are in Appendix G.

## Presentation and Analysis of Results

Four methods were used to assess the effects of the interventions on student writing. A teacher scored rubric and a student scored rubric were used for both a baseline piece of writing done before instruction and the final piece of writing done at the end of the project (see Appendix A). For the writing rubrics scores, total scores for an S (area of strength) were 100 to 80 points, for an E (grade expectation) were 79 to 55 points, for a G (goal for improvement) were 54 to 30 points, and scores of 29 or less were considered unacceptable. Teachers also assessed student written reflections for the baseline and final pieces of writing (see Appendix B). Students' responses on the reflections were scored on a point scale of zero to eight. A point was awarded for each writing strategy used by students on a piece of writing. A portfolio rubric was used to score student work done during the course of the project (see Appendix C). The portfolio rubrics had the same

range of points for grades as the writing rubric. Teachers and students completed this rubric together. The data was analyzed for each site in the action research project.

Site A

Site A consisted of 24 fourth grade students who participated in the project. All students completed the writing assignments, assessments, and reflections and were included in the data analysis. Scores from student-scored rubrics, teacher-scored rubrics, reflections, and portfolio rubrics are shown in Appendix H.

Students wrote a baseline piece of writing and a final piece of writing that were scored with a weighted rubric. A comparison of the teacher scored rubric for these pieces is shown in Figure 4.

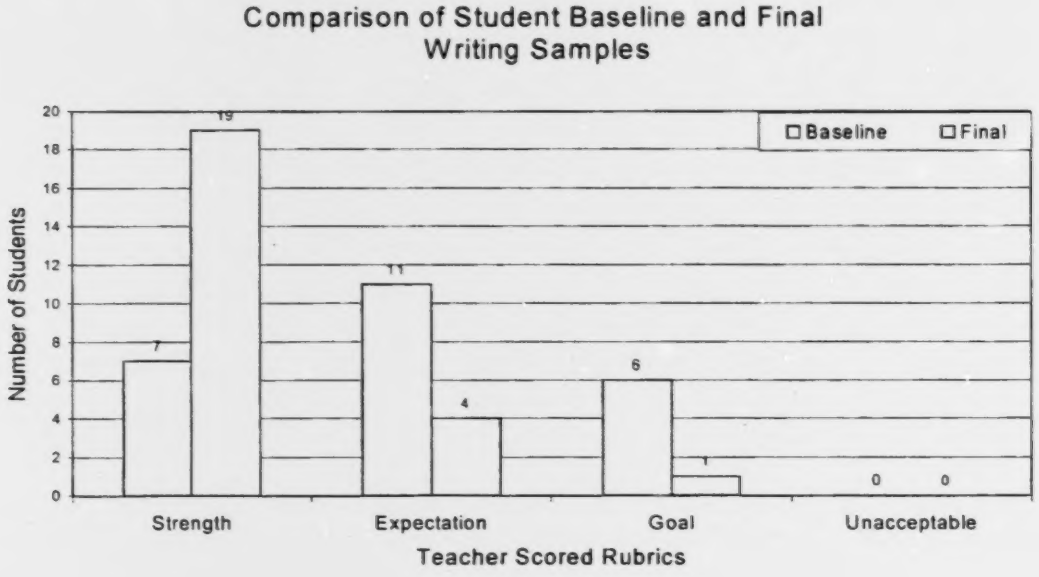


Figure 4. Site A comparison of student writing samples with teacher scored rubrics showed an overall improvement in student scores. The baseline scores showed that 18 of the 24, or 75%, of students scored at grade level expectation or above. The final writing



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pieces indicated that 23 of the students, or 96%, performed at grade level or above and only one of the students had an unacceptable writing sample.

The results of the teacher-scored rubrics on the baseline and final pieces are listed in Appendix H. Individual improvement by students is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Improvement on Teacher-Scored Writing Rubrics

| Improved Scores | No. Students | Same Scores | No. Students | Lower Scores | No. Students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1-10 points | 4 | | 1 | 1-10 points | 0 |
| 11-20 points | 8 | | | 11-20 points | |
| 21-30 points | 11 | | | 21-30 points | |
| 31-40 points | | | | 31-40 points | |
| 41-50 points | | | | 41-50 points | |
| 51-60 points | | | | 51-60 points | |

Note. Table 2 shows that 23 students improved their scores on the teacher-scored rubrics. Of these 23 students, 11 increased their scores by 21 or more points. Only one student scored the same on the final piece compared to the baseline piece and no students scored lower.

Students also scored their baseline and final pieces using the same rubric as the teacher. The scores for the student-scored rubrics are shown in Appendix H. Their self-assessments were compared to the teacher assessments for these same pieces. A comparison of the differences between these rubric scores is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that at the beginning of the project there were larger differences between teacher scores and student scores at Site A. On the baseline piece, only 11 students fell within the 0-10 point range, while on the final piece 20 students were within



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this range. Twenty students were within a 0-10 point range by the end of the project compared to only 11 at the beginning.

Table 3

Difference Between Teacher and Student Writing Rubric Total Scores

| Baseline Writing Sample Scores | | Final Writing Sample Scores | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Differences | No. Students | Differences | No. Students |
| 0-10 points | 1 | 0-10 points | 20 |
| 11-20 points | 13 | 11-20 points | 3 |
| 21-30 points | 0 | 21-30 points | 1 |
| 31-40 points | 0 | 31-40 points | 0 |
| 41-50 points | 0 | 41-50 points | 0 |
| 51-60 points | 0 | 51-60 points | 0 |

Student reflections were another tool used by the teachers to assess student use of the writing strategies. Reflections were scored on the baseline and final writing pieces (see Appendix H).

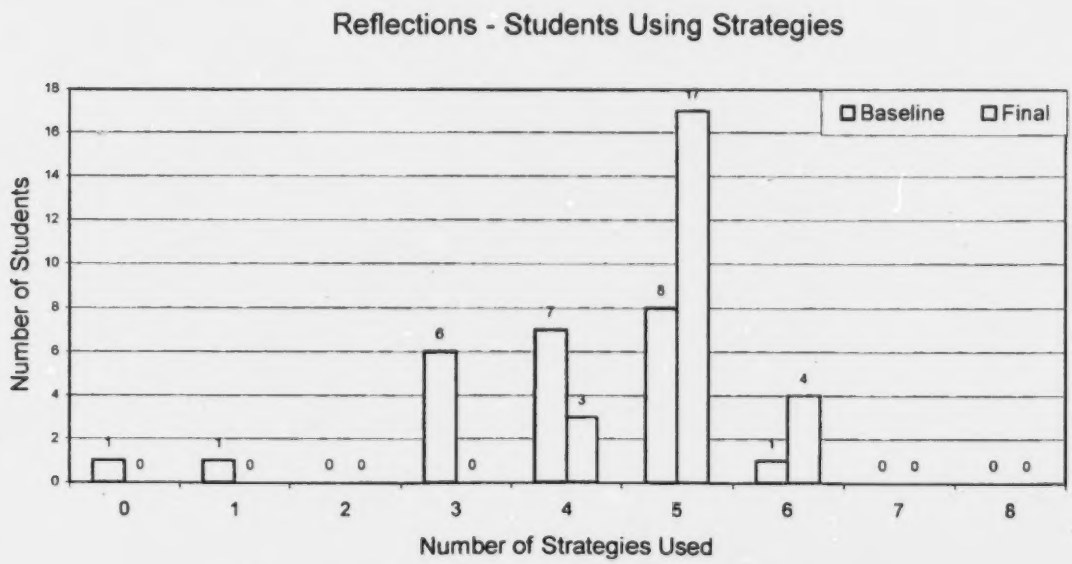

Figure 5. Student use of writing strategies appeared to have increased from the baseline writing to the final writing. On the baseline piece eight students used three or fewer strategies when writing. There were no students who used three or fewer strategies on the final piece. All 24 students fell within the 4 to 6 point range for use of these strategies on the final piece.

The teacher and student together assessed student portfolios using one rubric (see Appendix H. Student scores for the portfolios are shown in Figure 6.

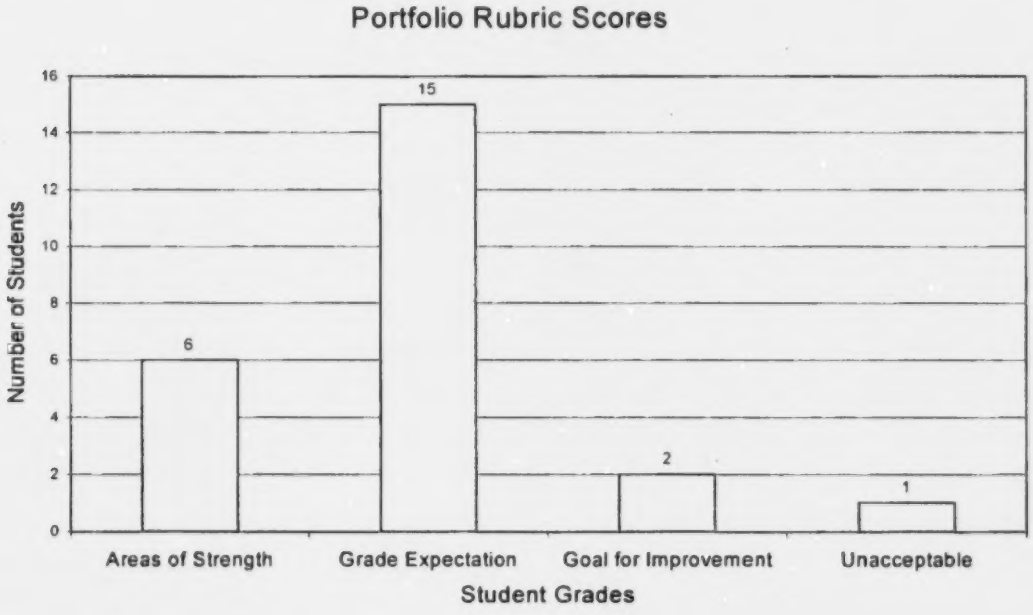


Figure 6. Portfolio assessment scores showed 15 students at grade expectation. Only six students scored in the area of strength and two students scored at goal for improvement. The most significant scores for the portfolios were the numbers received by students for specific categories on the rubric. These scores are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Portfolio Indicators from Rubrics

| Understands Concepts | | Use of Reflections | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scores | No. of Students | Scores | No. of Students |
| 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| 3 | 13 | 3 | 13 |
| 2 | 8 | 2 | 6 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |

Note. Portfolio rubric indicators for understanding of the writing concepts and effective use of reflections showed that not all students scored the highest point value. Only three students scored 4 for the concepts indicator, and only three scored a 4 for the reflection category. A score of 2 or 1 for these indicators was considered below standard. Nine students scored in this range for understanding concepts, and eight were in this range for reflections.

Site B

Site B consisted of 25 fifth graders participating in the writing project. All of the fifth grade students included in the project completed the identical writing assignments, assessments and reflections. These various assignments were included in the data analysis. Scores from the student rubrics, teacher rubrics, reflections and portfolio rubrics are shown in Appendix I.

At the start of the project, the students wrote a baseline piece of writing and at the conclusion of the project wrote a final piece of writing. The students and the teacher, using a weighted rubric, scored both pieces of writing. The comparison of the student and teacher's scores are shown in Figure 7.



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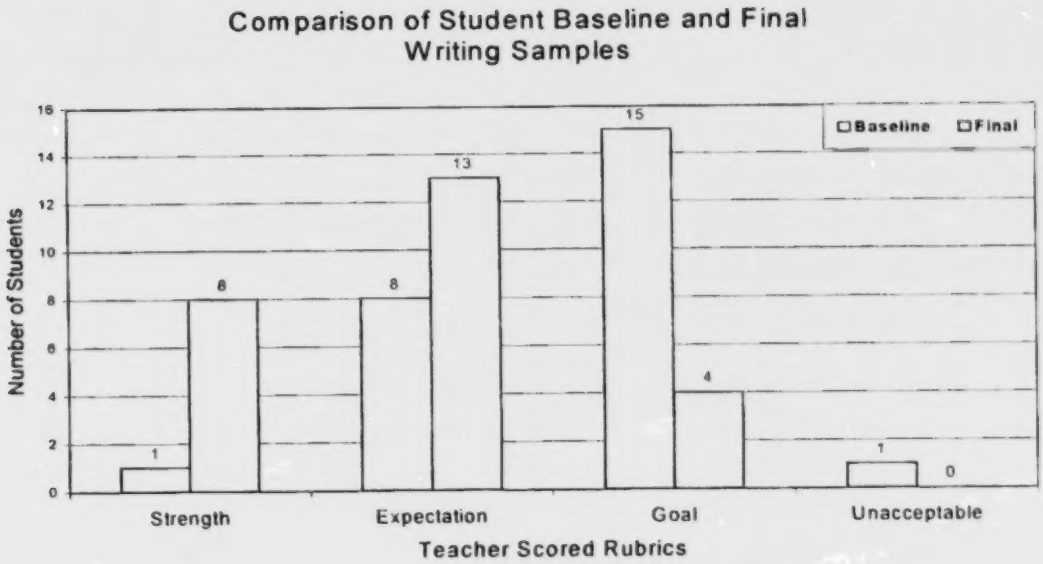


Figure 7. Site B comparison of student writing pieces, baseline and final, reflect an overall improvement in the quality of student writing skills. This improvement is based on the teacher scored rubric. The baseline scores showed that only 9 of the 25 students wrote at grade level or above the grade level expectation. The final writing piece demonstrates that 21 of the students now write at or above the level of expectation. The baseline scores indicated that 1 student had unacceptable writing skills while the final writing piece showed that none of the students had unacceptable writing skills.

The scores for the teacher scored rubrics on the baseline and final pieces are listed in Appendix I. Individual improvement by students is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Improvement on Teacher-Scored Writing Rubrics

| Range of Points Up | No. of Students | Points Down | No. of Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-10 points | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| 11-20 points | 9 | 7 | 1 |
| 21-30 points | 5 | | |
| 31-40 points | 4 | | |
| 41-50 points | 1 | | |
| 51-60 points | 1 | | |

Note. Table 5 shows that of the 25 students involved in the writing project, 21 showed improvement in their writing skill as shown by the final rubric scores. One child, who scored 100% on the baseline rubric, sustained that score on the final writing rubric. Three children scored lower on the final writing piece than on their baseline writing piece.

In addition to the teacher scoring the student's baseline and final writing pieces, the students scored both those writing pieces as well, using the same rubric used by the teacher. The student scored rubric results are shown in Appendix I. The assessments made by the students about their own work were compared to the assessment made by the teacher regarding their work. The comparison of the differences between the assessments, as demonstrated through the rubric, is shown in Table 6.



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Table 6

Difference Between Teacher and Student Writing Rubric Total Scores

| Range of Points | Number of Students | |
|---|---|---|
| | Baseline Piece | Final Piece |
| 0-10 points | 1 | 7 |
| 11-20 points | 6 | 9 |
| 21-30 points | 4 | 3 |
| 31-40 points | 7 | 2 |
| 41-50 points | 7 | 3 |
| 51-60 points | 0 | 1 |

Note. Site B examination of the teacher and student scored rubrics reflects a discrepancy in the initial teacher and student view of the students' efficacy in regard to writing. The baseline scores show that only one student came within a 0-10 point range of the teacher scored rubric. The final writing piece shows that 16 students scored themselves within that same 0-10 point range. Sixteen students were within a 0-20 point range with regard to the final rubric score while only seven were in that range on the baseline rubric.

Student reflections were another instrument of assessment employed by the teachers to evaluate the manner in which the students made use of the writing strategies. These reflections, like the writing pieces, were scored for baseline and final assessment (see Appendix I).



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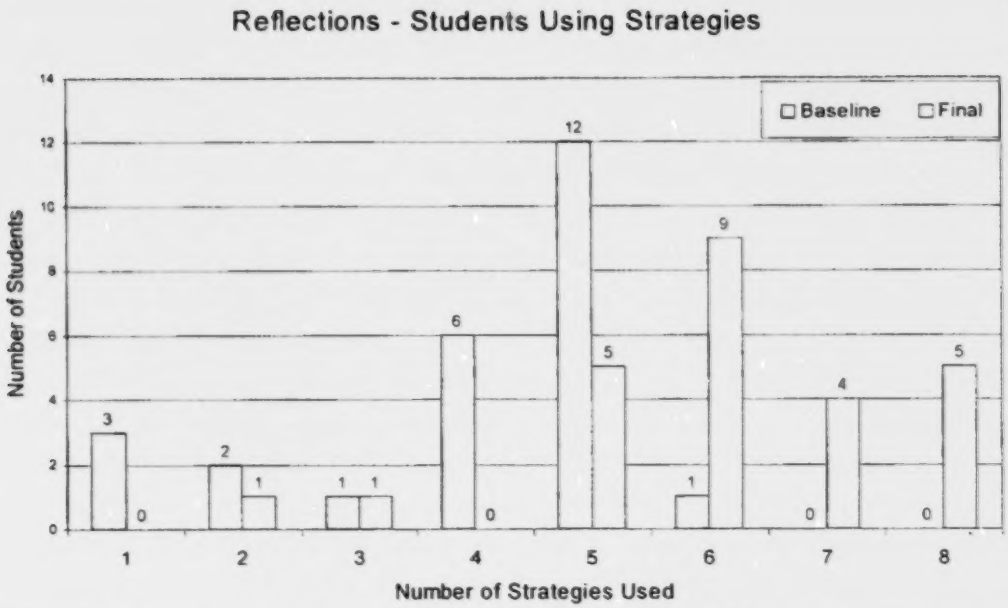


Figure 8. The data would suggest that the students' use of writing strategies increased over the course of the writing project. The baseline data reveals 12 students employed more than four strategies while creating the baseline writing sample. This number compared to 23 students using more than four writing strategies on the final writing piece.

Results of the teacher-scored assessment of the portfolios are shown in Figure 9.

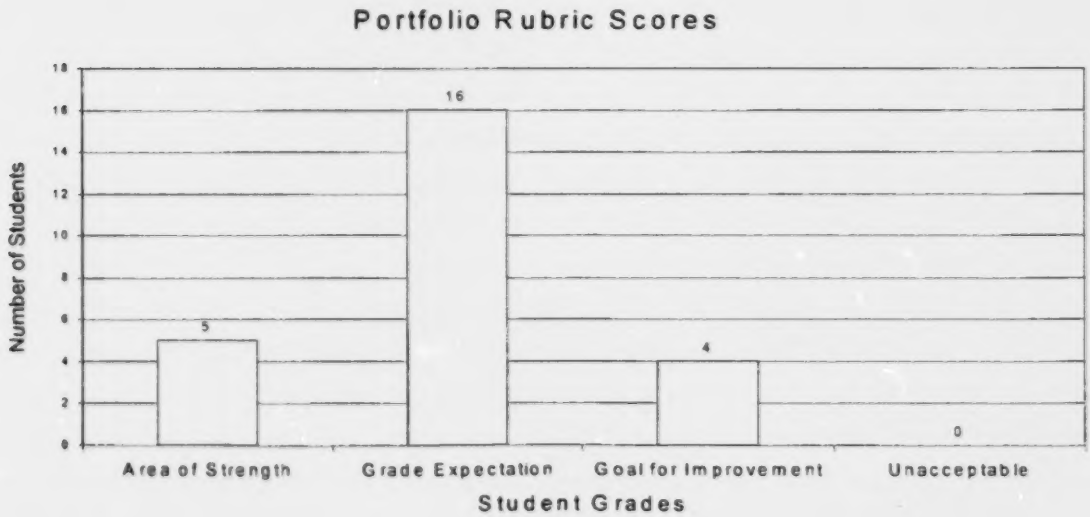




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Figure 9. The majority of the portfolio scores were in the area of strength and expectation with 21 students earning scores in the areas of strength or grade level expectation. Only four students received a grade of goal for improvement. The focus of the rubric scores was on two specific categories. Table 7 illustrates the results of those two categories.

Table 7

Portfolio Rubric Specific Indicators

| Understands Concepts | | Use of Reflections | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scores | No. of Students | Scores | No. of Students |
| 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| 3 | 15 | 3 | 17 |
| 2 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

4=Area of Strength 3=Grade Expectation 2=Goal for Improvement 1=Unacceptable

Note. A close examination of the portfolio rubric scores indicates the level of understanding of how to apply the writing concepts and an effective use of reflection in the writing process. Only three students scored 4 for the concepts indicator and only one received that score for the reflection category. Fifteen scored in the expectation range of understanding the concepts and 17 scored in that range for the reflection category. A score of 1 or 2 for these indictors was considered below standard. Seven students scored in this range for concepts and the same was true for reflections.

Site C

Site C consisted of 25 fifth grade students who participated in the project. All students completed the writing assignments, assessments, and reflections and were

included in the data analysis. Scores from student rubrics, teacher rubrics, reflections, and portfolio rubrics are shown in Appendix J.

Students wrote a baseline piece of writing and a final piece of writing that were scored with a weighted rubric. A comparison of the teacher scored rubric for these pieces is shown in Figure 10.

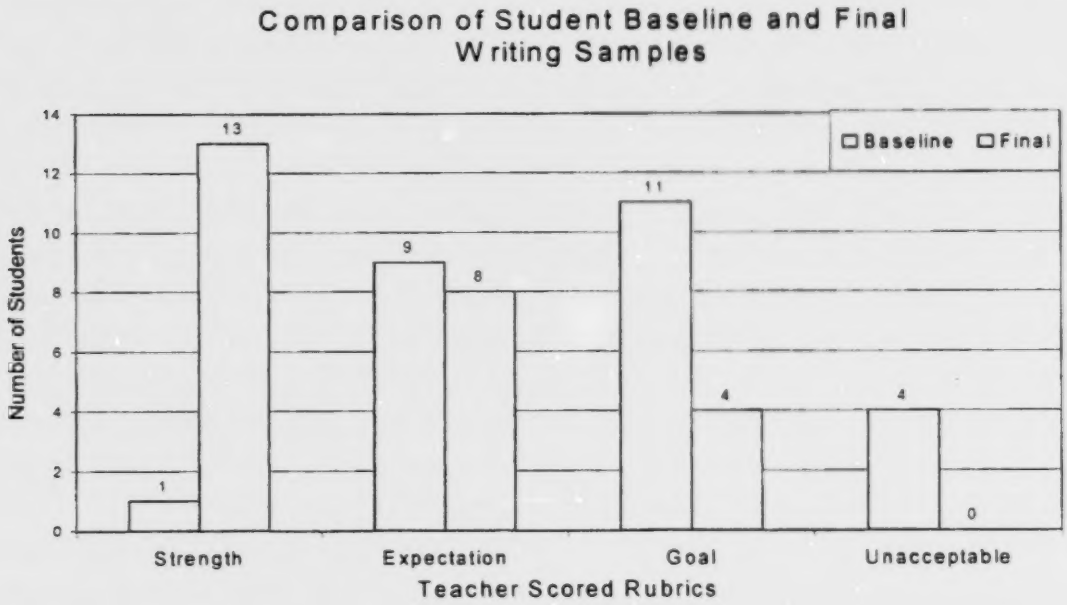


Figure 10. Site C comparison of student writing samples with teacher scored rubrics showed an overall improvement in student scores. The baseline scores showed that only 10 of the 25 students scored at grade level expectation or above. The final writing pieces indicated that 21 of the students performed at grade level or above and none of the students had unacceptable writing samples.

The scores for the teacher scored rubrics on the baseline and final pieces are listed in Appendix J. Individual improvement by students is shown in Table 8.

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Table 8

Improvement on Teacher-Scored Writing Rubrics

| Range of Points Up | No. of Students | Points Down | No. of Students |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-10 points | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 11-20 points | 9 | | |
| 21-30 points | 5 | | |
| 31-40 points | 4 | | |
| 41-50 points | 1 | | |
| 51-60 points | 1 | | |

Note. The improvement chart shows that 24 students improved their scores on the teacher-scored rubrics. Of these 24 students, 17 increased their scores by 21 or more points. Only one student scored lower on the final piece compared to the baseline piece.

Students also scored their baseline and final pieces using the same rubric as the teacher. The scores for the student scored rubrics are shown in Appendix J. Their self-assessments were compared to the teacher assessments for these same pieces. A comparison of the differences between these rubric scores is shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Differences Between Teacher and Student Writing Rubric Total Scores

| | Number of Students | |
|---|---|---|
| Range of Points | Baseline Piece | Final Piece |
| 0-10 points | 1 | 11 |
| 11-20 points | 2 | 8 |
| 21-30 points | 8 | 3 |
| 31-40 points | 6 | 3 |
| 41-50 points | 5 | 0 |
| 51-60 points | 3 | 0 |

Note. Site C comparison of teacher and student scored rubrics indicates that at the beginning of the project there were larger differences between teacher scores and student scores. On the baseline piece only one student fell within the 0-10 point range, while on the final piece 11 students were within this range. Nineteen students were within a 0-20 point range by the end of the project compared to only 3 at the beginning.

Student reflections were another tool used by the teachers to assess student use of the writing strategies. Reflections were scored on the baseline and final writing pieces (see Appendix J).

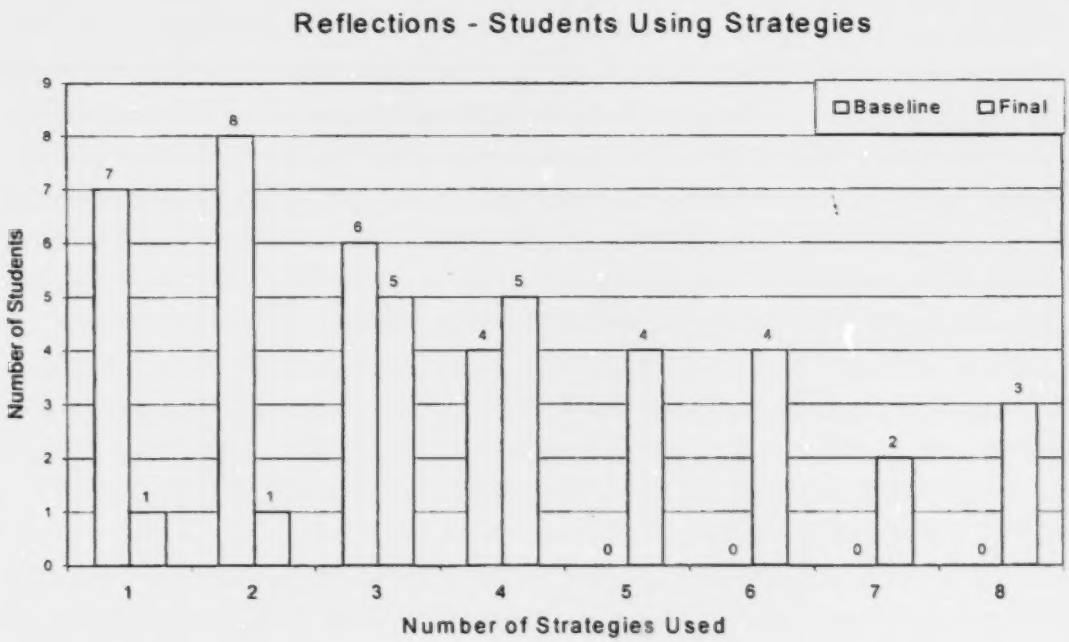


Figure 11. Student use of writing strategies appeared to have increased from the baseline writing to the final writing. On the baseline piece 21 students used 3 or fewer strategies when writing compared to 7 students on the final piece. Most students (18) used 4 or more of these strategies on the final piece.

The teacher and student together assessed student portfolios using one rubric (see Appendix J). Student scores for the portfolios are shown in Figure 12.

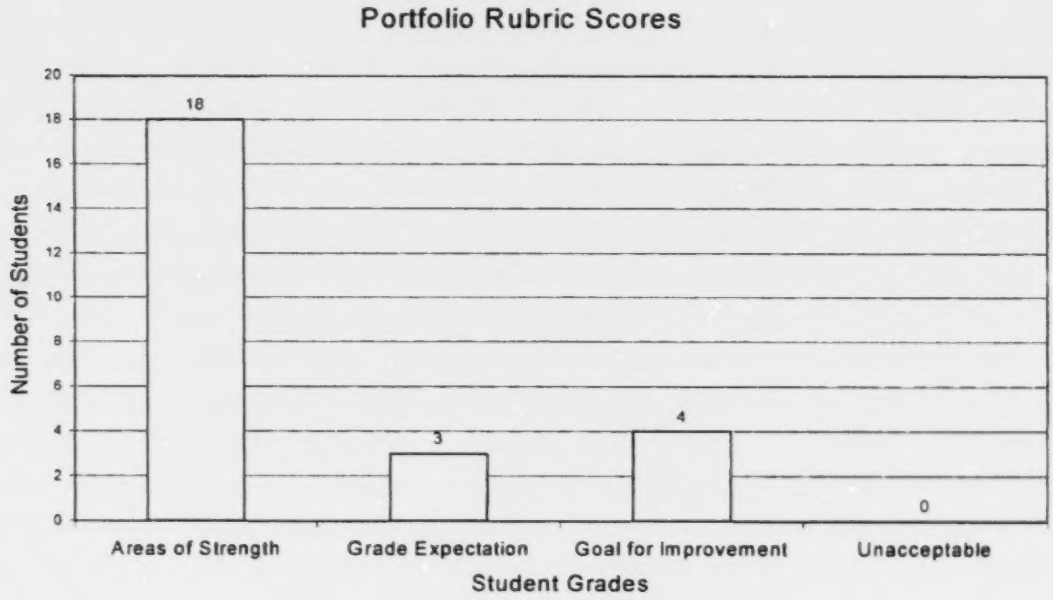


Figure 12. Portfolio assessment scores were predominately in the area of strength with 18 students. Only 4 students received a goal for improvement score. The most significant scores for the portfolios were the numbers received by students for specific categories on the rubric. This information is outlined in Table 10.

Table 10

Portfolio Indicators from Rubrics

| Understands Concepts | | Use of Reflections | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scores | No. of Students | Scores | No. of Students |
| 4 | 11 | 4 | 13 |
| 3 | 9 | 3 | 4 |
| 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |

4=Area of Strength 3=Grade Expectation 2=Goal for Improvement 1=Unacceptable

Note. Table 10, Portfolio rubric indicators for understanding of the writing concepts and effective use of reflections, showed a range of student scores. For the concepts indicator 11 scored the highest value of 4, 9 scored 3, and 5 scored below grade level expectation. For the reflections indicator 13 scored 4, 4 scored 3, and 7 were below grade level expectation.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this action research project showed a marked improvement in student writing scores for all three sites. The modeling, direct instruction, making connections between good literature and good writing, providing more time to write, using reflections and considering an audience seemed to have contributed to the improvement of student writing. The introduction and implementation of a six-trait writing rubric to improve students' writing also appeared to have had a positive effect on their overall writing skills. The understanding, as well as the application of these six writing traits was evident not only in the final wr ting piece submitted for specific evaluation, but also in weekly writing samples. Students exhibited an ongoing ability to express their recognition and definition of the various writing traits during teacher guided discussions of writing. Based on the presentation of the data for improving student-writing skills, the students showed a marked improvement in their ability to communicate more effectively through their writing.

Evidence of this improvement is shown on the teacher rubric scores comparing baseline and final writing. At Site A, student performing at or above grade level expectation rose from 75% to 96%; at Site B, from 36% to 84%; and at Site C, from 40% to 84%.

Further evidence of student growth is demonstrated in the point range of improvement on rubric scores. Researchers considered an increase of rubric scores by 21 or more points significant since it meant a probable change in a student grade by one level (G to E, or E to S). An increase of less than 20 points was not considered significant improvement because the range of points for each grade (S, G, E) was 20 or more points. Results from Site A showed 11 of the 24 students, or 46%, improved by this range; Site B showed 11 of 25, or 44%; and Site C showed 17 of 25, or 68%. It is also noteworthy that Site A had no students, Site B had three students and Site C had only one student receive lower scores on the final rubric compared to the baseline rubric.

The data collected on student rubrics compared to teacher rubrics is another possible indicator of student growth. Examination of the difference range of 0 to 10 points at all the sites showed that more students scored within this range on the final writing piece compared to the baseline writing piece. This would appear to indicate that students were better able to assess their writing after instruction and better able to recognize specific traits within their writing.

Another indication of growth was the increased number of strategies that the students referred to in their writing reflections. There were eight points given for strategies students used when writing. These strategies included use of idea notebooks, brainstorming, use of graphic organizers or outlines, writing of rough drafts, and editing for word choice, voice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Even though their writing did not show consistent evidence of the use of the writing traits, the students became comfortable with the terms and were able to recognize them in good literature. Reflections on their own writing indicated an awareness of the writing traits, and efforts

to incorporate them. Reflections done in association of the final writing piece revealed new insight on the part of each child with regard to strategies implemented during the writing process. At the beginning of the project at Site A, 16 students used 4 or more of these strategies and at the end, all 24 used 4 or more strategies. At Site B this number rose from 12 students to 23, and at Site C from 0 to 18. This evidence suggested improvement in students' ability to analyze their writing and appeared to mark considerable improvement for all three sites. This analysis is, of course, based on the assumption that student reflections were accurate descriptions of their work.

Portfolio rubrics were the final piece of assessment. The general scores for the portfolio rubrics indicated that most students performed at grade level expectation or above. Site A had 87%, Site B had 80%, and Site C had 84% of the students score at this level. Further analysis of the data included looking at two indicators on the rubrics that researchers felt were most important in the data on student portfolios. These two indicators were an attempt to check for student understanding of concepts on writing traits and student use of reflections to analyze these traits in their writing. Researchers felt that for students to demonstrate a clear understanding of the concepts taught, they needed to score 4 on the rubric. The resulting data indicated to the researchers that more work was needed in these areas. Site A had 12% of the students score a 4 for concepts and 12% score a 4 on reflections; Site B had 16% score 4 on concepts and 4% score 4 for reflections; and Site C had 44% for concepts and 53% for reflections. Based on this thinking, researchers believed the portfolios were not an effective strategy to improve student writing. The students were very proud of their collection of writing, and were pleased at the prospect of having a portfolio. However, given the difficulty they had in

determining what to include and why each piece was chosen, the portfolios performed only as a collection of writing, and not as a tool for improving writing. Researchers felt it was not the portfolio itself but the reflections (see Appendix E) and self-assessment pieces (see Appendix F) students did weekly and then put in the portfolio that allowed for assessment of student work.

Improvements to this writing project would include several recommendations. These would include an evaluation of the time allowance for both the time per day and the number of weeks, an improved system of instruction on reflections, and a re-evaluation of the portfolio phase.

The time element used by the researchers seemed rushed and inadequate for the interventions. Extending the length of the project would give more time for instruction and reflection. The launch time at the beginning of the school year would need to be retained and even extended for this project, since students need to be given adequate instruction about a process they will be implementing and refining throughout the school year. Shortened school weeks and the demands of the rest of the curriculum periodically interfered with the amount of time spent writing. The goal of writing for one hour daily was sometimes unrealistic; however, if students were not given adequate time, they felt rushed to complete writing pieces or projects needed to be adjusted to accommodate the time frame. It would be beneficial to the development of student writing if time restrictions were relaxed and additional exercises associates with each writing trait or skill could be introduced and/or elaborated upon when necessary. Extending the time allotted for modeling and practice of each trait would be beneficial for all students.

Another area which researchers felt needed improvement was the reflections phase. The reflections done by the students at all three sites seemed inadequate. More modeling and instruction done by the teachers, and allowing more time in this area would be beneficial. Children need time to think about their learning in order to fully transfer that learning, allowing more time to develop the skill of metacognition is essential in order to facilitate better and more complete writing reflections.

The portfolios were another area that needed to be evaluated. The researchers felt the portfolio had a valid place in the project but needed greater amounts of time for the students to develop effectively. Students tended to spend too much time doing unimportant things for their portfolios such as drawing and coloring. More instruction, modeling, and direction needed to be given to make the final portfolio an effective assessment.

All three researchers felt the project was manageable, useful, valuable and productive. In addition, all three sites showed evidence of improvement in the overall quality of students' writing skills. However, it must be noted that in any assessment or evaluation of writing, some subjectivity is involved. This can be present even with the use of rubrics or assessments that strive for objectivity by the assessors. Therefore, the accuracy of this data is only as good as the objectivity of the researchers and must be viewed from that perspective.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Writing Rubric

## Writing Rubric

Task:
Name:_____

Goal:
Topic_____

| Criteria | Indicators | 4 Excellent | 3 Good | 2 Fair | 1 Poor | Weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ideas | -knowledge of topic<br>-focus on main point<br>-support for main point | clearly focused, many details | good ideas, needs more details | ideas not focused on main topic | needs more Information, wanders off | ____ x 5 = ____ |
| Organization | -introduction<br>-order of ideas<br>-topic clarity<br>-conclusion | catchy intro., logical order, important conclusion | introduction, order, and Conclusion present | introduction or conclusion, missing, ideas, need better order | no introduction or conclusion, confusing | ____ x 5 = ____ |
| Voice | -connections to reader<br>-connections to purpose and topic<br>- | cares about topic, shows confidence and knowledge, draws in reader | shows some interest in topic, engages reader at times | shows little interest in topic, does little to engage reader | doesn't care about topic or reader | ____ x 4 = ____ |
| Word Choice | -terminology/mood words<br>-explanations/images<br>-clarity for reader/feeling for reader | accurate and understandable terms, or words w/ images & moods | uses correct terms but not completely clear, or has some words w/moods | struggles with terms, or does not create mood | neither writer nor reader can understand terms or mood | ____ x 4 = ____ |
| Sentence Fluency | -sentence lengths<br>-readability and rhythm<br>-connecting words | varied length, reads smoothly, transitions flow | some varied length, needs better transitions | sentences same length, needs more transition words | run-on and/or choppy sent., confusing | ____ x 4 = ____ |
| Conventions | -spelling<br>-punctuation<br>-grammar<br>-paragraphing | no noticeable mistakes | few errors but do not interfere with readability | many errors forcing reader to reread | errors so numerous reader confused | ____ x 3 = ____ |

TOTAL _____

S--100-80 E—79-55 G—54-30 29 or less must redo assignment

Jill Murphy 2001

55

62

63

Appendix B

Final Writing Reflection

Name_____

Reflection

Writing piece title_____

Type of writing_____

1. How did you decide what you would write about?

_____

_____

_____

_____

1 0

2. How did you organize your ideas before your started to write?

_____

_____

_____

2 1 0

3. Did you make a rough draft? _____ 1 0
What things did you change in your rough draft before writing your final copy?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 1 0

4. What could you do to improve this piece?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 1 0

Appendix C

Portfolio Rubric

## Portfolio Rubric

Task: Students are to complete a portfolio for the unit

Goal: _____

Name: _____

| Criteria | Indicators | 4 Excellent | 3 Good | 2 Fair | 1 Poor | Weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Visual Appeal | -neatness<br>-cover<br>-art work, color or designs | All elements present and creatively done | All elements present | One element missing | Two elements missing | ____ x 4 = ____ |
| Organization | -table of contents<br>-completeness<br>-timeliness | All elements show high level of organization and effort | All elements included | One element missing | Two elements missing | ____ x 4 = ____ |
| Evidence of Understanding of Concepts | -application of ideas<br>-knowledge of content<br>-key concepts covered | Pieces show ability to apply knowledge to new situations | Pieces show understanding of all concepts covered by unit | Pieces show some understanding of concepts covered | Pieces show little understanding of concepts in unit | ____ x 6 = ____ |
| Reflections | -one per piece<br>-depth of reflection<br>-ability to self-address | All present and show depth of insight and excellent ability to self-assess | | | | ____ x 7 = ____ |
| Conventions | -spelling<br>-punctuation<br>-grammar | No errors | A few errors | Numerous errors | Numerous errors making piece difficult to read | ____ x 4 = ____ |

TOTAL _____

S--100-80 E—79-55 G—54-30 29 or less must redo assignment

Jill Murphy 2001

59

Appendix D

Literature Model

Literature Models

Ideas Trait

Fletcher, R., The Writer's Notebook

Fox, M., Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge

Fox, M., Whoever You Are

Gile, J., Oh How I Wish I Could Read

Lowery, J., If I Were a Writer

Moss, M., Amelia's Notebook

Wyeth, S., Something Beautiful

Organization Trait

Rylant, C., When I Was Young in the Mountains

Yolen, J., Sleeping Ugly

Younger, B., Purple Mountain Majesties

Word Choice Trait

Gray, L., My Mama Had a Dancing Heart

Johnston, T., Amber on the Mountain

Schwartz, D., If You Hopped Like a Frog

Steig, W., Brave Irene

Tobias, T., Serendipity

Wood, A., Quick as a Cricket

Locker, T., Sky Tree

Sentence Fluency Trait

Wick, W., A Drop of Water

Rylant, C., In November

Voice Trait

Coleman, E., White Socks Only

Cyrus, K., Oddhopper Opera

Hall, D., I Am theDog, I Am the Cat

Turner, A., The Christmas House

McGovern, A., The Lady in the Box

Conventions Trait

Writer's Express

Appendix E

Student Reflection for Portfolio

Name_____

Date_____

Reflection

Writing piece title_____

Type of writing_____

2. Writing trait focused on with this piece: (check one)

___ ideas

___ organization

___ voice

___ word choice

___ sentence fluency

___ conventions

3. What I learned about using this trait when writing.

_____

_____

_____

4. How this helped me improve my writing.

_____

_____

_____

5. What I need to work on.

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F

Student Self-Assessment for Portfolio

IDEA DEVELOPMENT

5 The writing is clear, well supported or developed, and enhanced by the kind of detail that keeps readers reading.

- ☐ The writer selectively chooses just the right information to make the page understandable, enlightening and interesting-without bogging down in trivia.
- ☐ Details work together to expand the main topic or develop a story, giving the whole piece a strong sense of focus.
- ☐ The writer's knowledge, experience, insight or unique perspective lends the writing a satisfying ring of authenticity.
- ☐ The amount of detail is just right-not skimpy, not overwhelming.

3 The writer has made a solid beginning in defining a topic or mapping out a story line. It is easy to see where the paper is headed, though more expansion is needed to complete the picture.

- ☐ General, global information provides the big picture-and makes the reader long for specifics.
- ☐ Well focused information blends with repetitive points, trivia or meanderings.
- ☐ The writer draws on some personal experience-but too often settles for generalities or clichéd thinking.
- ☐ Unneeded information may eat up space that should have gone to important details. Where's the balance?

1 Sketchy, loosely focused information forces the reader to make inferences. Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems:

- ☐ The main topic is still unclear, out of focus-or not yet known, even to the writer.
- ☐ Missing, limited or unrelated details require the reader to fill in many blanks.
- ☐ List of"factlets" may be substituted for true development.
- ☐ Everything seems as important as everything else.

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ORGANIZATION

5 The order, presentation, or internal structure of the piece is compelling and guides the reader purposefully through the text.

- ☐ The entire piece has a strong sense of direction and balance. Main ideas or key points stand out clearly.
- ☐ An inviting lead draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion ties up loose ends.
- ☐ Details seem to fit right where they are placed, making the text easy to follow and understand.
- ☐ Transitions are strong but natural.
- ☐ Pacing feels natural and effective; the writer knows just when to linger over details and when to get moving.
- ☐ Organization flows so smoothly the reader does not need to think about it.

3 The organizational structure allows the reader to move through the text without undue confusion.

- ☐ Sequencing of main ideas seems reasonably appropriate; the reader rarely, if ever, feels lost
- ☐ Transitions are usually present, but sometimes a little too obvious or too structured..
- ☐ Structure may be so dominant or predictable that it literally smothers the ideas and voice.
- ☐ Information is mostly presented in an orderly, if not quite compelling, fashion

1 Ideas, details, or events seem loosely strung together. Readers will likely notice *more than one* of these problems:

- ☐ As yet, there is no clear sense of direction to carry the reader from point to point.
- ☐ No real lead sets up what follows.
- ☐ No real conclusion wraps things up.
- ☐ Missing or unclear transitions force the reader to make giant leaps.
- ☐ Sequencing feels more random than purposeful, leaving the reader with a sense of being adrift.
- ☐ The writing does not move purposefully toward any main message or turning point.

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WORD CHOICE

5 Precise, vivid, natural language paints a strong, clear, and complete picture in the reader's mind.

- ☐ The writer's message is remarkably clear and easy to interpret.
- ☐ Phrasing is original-even memorable-yet the language is never overdone.
- ☐ Lively verbs lend the writing power.
- ☐ Striking words or phrases linger in the writer's memory, often prompting connections, reflective thoughts or insights.

3 The language communicates in a routine, workable manner; it gets the job done.

- ☐ Most words are correct and adequate, even if not striking.
- ☐ A memorable phrase here or there strikes a spark, leaving the reader hungry for more.
- ☐ Familiar words and phrases give the text an "old couch" kind of feel.
- ☐ Attempts at colorful language are full of promise, even when they lack restraint or control. Jargon may be mildly annoying, but it does not impede readability.
- ☐ General meaning is clear, but the brush is too broad to convey subtleties.

1 The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary-or uses language that simply does not speak to the intended audience. Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems:

- ☐ Vague words and phrases (She is nice...it was wonderful...The new budget had impact) convey only the most general sorts of messages.
- ☐ Cliches or redundant phrases encourage the reader to skim, not linger.
- ☐ Words are used incorrectly ("The bus impelled into the hotel")
- ☐ Inflated or jargonistic language makes the text ponderous and uninviting
- ☐ The reader has trouble grasping the writer's intended message.

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SENTENCE FLUENCY

5 An easy flow and sentence sense make this text a delight to read aloud.

- ☐ Sentences are well crafted, with a strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.
- ☐ Purposeful sentence beginnings show how each sentence relates to and builds on the one before.
- ☐ The writing has cadence, as if the reader hears the beat in his or her head.
- ☐ Sentences vary in both structure and length, making the reading pleasant and natural.
- ☐ Fragments, if used, add style.

3 The text hums along with a steady beat.

- ☐ Sentences are mostly grammatical and easy to read aloud, given a little rehearsal
- ☐ Graceful, natural phrasing intermingles with more mechanical structure.
- ☐ More variation in length and structure would enhance fluency
- ☐ Some purposeful sentence beginnings aid the reader's interpretation of the text.
- ☐ Fragments may be present; not all add flair or punch.

1 A fair interpretive oral reading of this text takes practice. Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems:

- ☐ Irregular or unusual word patterns make it hard to tell where sentences begin and end.
- ☐ Ideas are hooked together by numerous connectives (and...but...so then) to create one gangly, endless "sentence".
- ☐ Short, choppy sentences bump the reader through the text.
- ☐ Repetitive sentence patterns put the reader to sleep
- ☐ Transitions are either missing or so overdone they become distracting
- ☐ The reader must often pause and reread for meaning.
- ☐ Fragments, if used, seem accidental; they do not work.

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VOICE

5 The writer's energy and passion for the subject drive the writing, making the text lively, expressive, and engaging.

- ☐ The tone and flavor of the piece fit the topic, purpose, and audience well.
- ☐ The writing bears the clear imprint of *this* writer.
- ☐ The writer seems to know his/her audience, and shows a strong concern for their informational needs and interests.
- ☐ Narrative text is open and honest.
- ☐ Expository or persuasive text is provocative, lively, and designed to hold a reader's attention.

3 The writer seems sincere and willing to communicate with the reader on a functional, if distant, level.

- ☐ The tone and flavor of the piece could be altered slightly to better fit the topic, purpose, or audience.
- ☐ The writer had not quite found his or her voice, but is experimenting-and the result is pleasant or intriguing, if not unique.
- ☐ The writer only occasionally speaks right to the audience.
- ☐ The writer often seems reluctant to "let go", holding individuality, passion and spontaneity in check. Nevertheless, voice pops out on occasion.
- ☐ The writer is "there"-then gone.

1 The writer seems definitely distanced from topic, audience, or both; as a result, the text may lack life, spirit, or energy. Readers are likely to notice one or more of these problems:

- ☐ The tone and flavor of the piece are inappropriate for the topic, purpose, and/or audience.
- ☐ The writer does not seem to reach out to the audience or to anticipate their interests and needs.
- ☐ Though it may communicate on a functional level, the writing takes no risks and does not engage, energize or move the reader.
- ☐ The writer does not project personal enthusiasm for the topic or make it come alive for the reader.

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CONVENTIONS

5 The writer shows excellent control over a wide range of standard writing conventions and uses them with accuracy and (when appropriate) creativity to enhance meaning.

- ☐ Errors are so few and so minor that a reader can easily overlook them unless searching for them specifically.
- ☐ The text appears clean, edited, and polished.
- ☐ Older writers (grade 6 and up) create text of sufficient length and complexity to demonstrate control of conventions appropriate for age and experience.
- ☐ The text is easy to mentally process; there is nothing to distract or confuse a reader.
- ☐ Only light touch-ups would be required to polish the text for publication.

3 The writer shows reasonable control over the most widely used writing conventions, creating text that is adequately readable.

- ☐ There are enough errors to distract an attentive reader; however, errors do not seriously impair readability or obscure meaning.
- ☐ It is easy enough for an experienced reader to get through the text, but the writing clearly needs polishing.
- ☐ The paper reads much like a second rough draft-readable, but lacking close attention to conventions.
- ☐ Moderate editing would be required to get the text ready for publication.

1 The writer demonstrates limited control even over widely used conventions. Readers are likely to notice on or more of these problems:

- ☐ Errors are sufficiently frequent and/or serious enough to be distracting; it is hard for the reader to focus on ideas, organization, and voice.
- ☐ The reader may need to read once to decode, then again to interpret and respond to the text.

---

Adapted from Creating Writers, Spandel, 3rd Edition, New York: Addison Wesley/Longman 2000. Used with permission.

CONVENTIONS (Cont'd)

- ☐ The paper reads like a rough first draft, scribbled hastily without thought for conventions.
- ☐ Extensive editing would be required to prepare the text for publication.

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Adapted from Creating Writers, Spandel, 3rd Edition, New York: Addison Wesley/Longman 2000. Used with permission.

# Appendix G

## Writing Lesson Plans

Writing Lesson

*Focus Trait:*
Organization

*Time:*
One hour

*Objectives:*

1. Students will demonstrate use of graphic organizers.
2. Students will discuss organization traits found in literature.
3. Students will use a graphic organizer prior to writing.

*Materials:*
Sleeping Ugly by Jane Yolen
Graphic organizer (see attached)
Large sheet of paper for chalkboard with enlarged graphic organizer

*Methods, Procedures, Activities:*

Anticipatory Set: Discuss different ways to organize writing

Input: Read Sleeping Ugly and discuss how the author organized the story following a model from a fairy tale.

Modeling: Teacher uses the large organizer to demonstrate how the fairy tale of The Three Little Pigs could be organized before writing.

Guided Practice: Students discuss how their recent field trip to a creek could be organized using the organizer.

Independent Practice: Using the small graphic organizers students fill in the parts for their experiences on the trip.

*Key Questions:*

1. Does the graphic organizer help?
2. Will this make writing the story easier?

*Evaluation:* Students work in pairs to discuss their organizers and to help partner improve on the details.

*Closure:* Students share and discuss organizers with large group and teacher. Suggestions given when needed, and good examples emphasized.

Writing Lesson

*Focus Trait:*
Voice

*Time:*
One hour

*Objectives:*

1. Students will recognize voice used in literature.
2. Students will practice using voice in writing.

*Materials:*
Video – "The Little Mermaid" by Disney
I Am the Dog, I Am the Cat by Donald Hall
Teacher notebook
Television camera
Student notebooks

*Methods, Procedures, Activities:*

Anticipatory Set: Teacher shows part of "Little Mermaid" movie where the Sea Witch steals the voice of the mermaid. Students and teacher discuss the importance of someone's voice.

Input: Teacher reads I Am the Dog, I Am the Cat. Discussion follows comparing and contrasting the voices of the cat and the dog and how the author uses voice to give the animals personality. Teacher asks students to write a rough draft for a story from the point of view of an animal or some object.

Modeling: The teacher then begins writing a story that is displayed via the camera to the television so students can see the writing as it progresses. Teacher points out how in her writing the character doing the talking is not the teacher.

Guided Practice: Teacher asks students to help improve the voice in her piece of writing.

Independent Practice: Students begin writing rough draft.

*Key Questions:*

1. How does voice help writing?
2. Can voice be used in any type of writing?

*Evaluation:* Students share pieces with other students and discuss how they could improve their writing.

*Closure:* Teacher reads her draft aloud and then asks others if they would like to share.

Writing Lesson

*Focus Trait:*
Word choice

*Time:*
One hour

*Objectives:*
State Goals

1. The students will understand the concept of good word choice.
2. The students will recognize good word choice in literature
3. The students will demonstrate their understanding of good word choice through word choice activities.

*Materials:*
Amber on the Mountain by Johnston
Chart paper
Writing notebooks
Drawing paper and crayons

*Methods, Procedures, Activities:*

Anticipatory Set: Discuss qualities of good word choice, define similes and metaphors, and how they affect writing.

Input: Read Amber on the Mountain. Find examples of metaphors and similes. Discuss how the author uses these types of phrases to enhance his or her writing. Discuss the visual image the metaphor or simile leaves with the reader.

Modeling: Make a list of common similes and metaphors on chart paper. Draw the image they bring to mind.

Guided Practice: The children work together to create new metaphors and similes.

Independent Practice: In their writing notebooks, the students create a list of their own similes and metaphors and create a drawing of the image they bring to mind.

*Key Questions:*

1. What is it about good word choice that enhances writing?
2. How will you incorporate good word choice in your own writing?

*Evaluation:*

- Are the students able to articulate the qualities of good word choice?
- Are the students able to identify examples of good word choice in their own writing?

*Closure:* Reread student's writing to look for ways to improve good word choice.

Writing Lesson

*Focus Trait:*
Conventions

*Time:*
Three one hour sessions

*Objectives:*
State Goals

1. The students will understand the concept of writing dialogue in a story.
2. The students will demonstrate their understanding of writing dialogue in a writing piece..

*Materials:*
Calvin and Hobbes by _____
Overhead projector
Overhead from a page in a book with dialogue
Drawing paper and crayons

*Methods, Procedures, Activities:*

Anticipatory Set: Discuss qualities of dialogue in a story and how dialogue enhances a story.

Input: Discuss components of dialogue and quotations in a story. Find examples of dialogue on the overhead.

Modeling: Create a cartoon. With two characters speaking to one another. Then create a story that explains what's going on in the story. Rewrite the story leaving blank spaces where the dialogue belongs. Insert the dialogue using different color pens or pencils so the dialogue is easily recognizable.

Guided Practice: The children insert the quotation marks where needed..

Independent Practice: The students follow the same steps that were modeled. Allow one day for creating the cartoon, the story and then to complete the story with quotation marks.

*Key Questions:*

3. What is it about dialogue that enhances writing?
4. How will you incorporate dialogue correctly in your own writing?

*Evaluation:*

- Are the students able to demonstrate the correct use of quotation marks in a story?

*Closure:*

Reread student's writing to look for correct use of quotation marks.

Writing Lesson

*Focus Trait:*
Sentence fluency

*Time:*
One hour

*Objectives:*
State Goal

1. The students will understand the qualities of sentence fluency.
2. The students will recognize sentence fluency in good literature.
3. The students will demonstrate their understanding of sentence fluency in their writing.

*Materials:*
In November by Cynthia Rylant
Writing traits descriptors of sentence fluency
Bulletin board poster
Writing notebooks

*Methods, Procedures, Activities:*

Anticipatory Set: Discuss qualities of sentence fluency and how it affects writing.

Input: Read In November. Find examples where the author effectively used sentence fluency.

Modeling: Write a piece on the overhead using sentences that are the same length. Use "then" at the beginning of almost every sentence.

Guided Practice: The children will work together to create a piece of writing that demonstrates good sentence fluency.

Independent Practice: Using the model, In November, the students write their own version, paying attention to sentence fluency.

*Key Questions:*
1. What are the qualities of sentence fluency?
2. What are some examples of sentence fluency in your own writing?

*Evaluation:*

- Are the students able to articulate the qualities of sentence fluency?
- Are they able to identify examples of sentence fluency in their own writing?

*Closure:* Reread student's writing to look for ways to improve sentence fluency.

Writing Lesson

*Focus Writing Trait:*
Idea Development

*Time:*
One hour

*Objectives:*
State goal

1. The students will demonstrate their understanding of the writing process.
2. The students will see the connection between a sculptor and a writer.

*Materials:*
1. Lesson script
2. Play-Doh - One color per child
3. One small paper plate per child

*Methods, Procedures, Activities:*

Anticipatory Set: Explain to the students that they are going to use only their hands – no paper, no pencils

Input: Tell the student that they are going to find out what process a writer goes through to produce a final piece.

Modeling: I will model working with the Play-Doh as I read from the script.

Guided Practice: I will begin reading the script. I will talk the students through the activity where they become acquainted with the creator and the critic within themselves.

Independent Practice: The students will have an opportunity to add details to refine their creation—the revision.

*Key Questions:*

1. What process does a writer go through to produce a final piece?
2. How is a writer like a sculptor?

*Evaluation:*

- Were the students able to verbalize the writing process?
- Could they verbalize the connection between creating with Play-Doh and creating with words?

*Closure:*

Review the process of creating a piece of writing.

Appendix H

Site A: Original Data Collection Scores

## SITE A: ORIGINAL DATA COLLECTION SCORES

| | Writing Rubrics | | | | | | Reflections Strategies | | Portfolios | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Baseline | | | Final | | | | | | Concepts | Reflections |
| Students | Student Scored | Teacher Scored | Difference | Student Scored | Teacher Scored | Difference | Baseline | Final | Total | Scores | Scores |
| A | 79 | 60 | 19 | 95 | 100 | -5 | 3 | 6 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| B | 59 | 38 | 21 | 88 | 97 | -9 | 4 | 5 | 65 | 2 | 3 |
| C | 75 | 47 | 28 | 71 | 77 | -6 | 4 | 5 | 57 | 2 | 3 |
| D | 85 | 66 | 19 | 92 | 89 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 58 | 2 | 2 |
| E | 60 | 59 | 1 | 79 | 84 | -5 | 3 | 5 | 50 | 2 | 2 |
| F | 82 | 52 | 30 | 100 | 83 | 17 | 3 | 4 | 79 | 3 | 3 |
| G | 71 | 100 | -29 | 78 | 83 | -5 | 5 | 5 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| H | 86 | 46 | 40 | 87 | 83 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 60 | 3 | 2 |
| I | 70 | 79 | -9 | 86 | 83 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 68 | 3 | 2 |
| J | 87 | 78 | 9 | 75 | 83 | -8 | 3 | 5 | 72 | 3 | 2 |
| K | 92 | 86 | 6 | 95 | 100 | -5 | 4 | 5 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| L | 83 | 84 | -1 | 71 | 97 | -26 | 1 | 5 | 65 | 2 | 3 |
| M | 91 | 75 | 16 | 88 | 75 | 13 | 3 | 6 | 83 | 3 | 3 |
| N | 67 | 68 | -1 | 76 | 51 | 25 | 4 | 5 | 68 | 3 | 3 |
| O | 71 | 65 | 6 | 91 | 100 | -9 | 4 | 6 | 87 | 3 | 3 |
| P | 82 | 65 | 17 | 93 | 100 | -7 | 0 | 5 | 87 | 3 | 3 |
| Q | 78 | 65 | 13 | 80 | 72 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 71 | 3 | 3 |
| R | 82 | 92 | -10 | 88 | 100 | -12 | 5 | 5 | 79 | 3 | 3 |
| S | 79 | 50 | 29 | 88 | 70 | 18 | 4 | 4 | 43 | 2 | 1 |
| T | 53 | 48 | 5 | 64 | 39 | 25 | 5 | 5 | 29 | 1 | 1 |
| U | 83 | 87 | -4 | 97 | 100 | -3 | 5 | 5 | 73 | 3 | 3 |
| V | 65 | 67 | -2 | 75 | 100 | -25 | 5 | 5 | 79 | 3 | 3 |
| W | 86 | 87 | -1 | 83 | 100 | -17 | 5 | 5 | 98 | 4 | 4 |
| X | 78 | 91 | -13 | 78 | 100 | -22 | 5 | 6 | 65 | 2 | 3 |

Appendix I

Site B: Original Data Collection Scores

SITE B: ORIGINAL DATA COLLECTION SCORES

| Students | Writing Rubrics | | | | | | Reflections Strategies | | Portfolios | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Baseline | | | Final | | | | | | Concepts | Reflections |
| | Student Scored | Teacher Scored | Difference | Student Scored | Teacher Scored | Difference | Baseline | Final | Total | Score | Score |
| A | 89 | 43 | 46 | 98 | 80 | 18 | 4 | 8 | 60 | 2 | 2 |
| B | 88 | 54 | 34 | 97 | 79 | 20 | 2 | 6 | 80 | 3 | 3 |
| C | 88 | 76 | 12 | 82 | 75 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| D | 71 | 41 | 30 | 75 | 34 | 41 | 1 | 5 | 40 | 1 | 2 |
| E | 74 | 28 | 46 | 92 | 67 | 25 | 1 | 0 | 40 | 1 | 2 |
| F | 84 | 38 | 46 | 84 | 37 | 47 | 1 | 3 | 52 | 3 | 2 |
| G | 88 | 45 | 43 | 100 | 48 | 52 | 5 | 6 | 61 | 2 | 3 |
| H | 75 | 62 | 13 | 96 | 66 | 30 | 2 | 5 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| I | 75 | 68 | 7 | 88 | 82 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 92 | 4 | 4 |
| J | 83 | 43 | 40 | 92 | 58 | 34 | 5 | 6 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| K | 79 | 58 | 21 | 88 | 79 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| L | 79 | 43 | 36 | 84 | 97 | 13 | 4 | 6 | 71 | 3 | 3 |
| M | 73 | 38 | 35 | 66 | 51 | 15 | 4 | 5 | 46 | 2 | 2 |
| N | 87 | 67 | 20 | 96 | 83 | 13 | 4 | 7 | 63 | 3 | 3 |
| O | 80 | 31 | 49 | 93 | 66 | 27 | 5 | 6 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| P | 87 | 100 | 13 | 96 | 100 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 81 | 4 | 3 |
| Q | 78 | 63 | 15 | 82 | 75 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| R | 84 | 37 | 47 | 100 | 58 | 42 | 4 | 7 | 46 | 2 | 2 |
| S | 75 | 41 | 34 | 89 | 75 | 14 | 5 | 6 | 83 | 3 | 3 |
| T | 83 | 36 | 47 | 91 | 78 | 13 | 5 | 6 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| U | 69 | 51 | 18 | 76 | 64 | 12 | 4 | 5 | 58 | 2 | 2 |
| V | 79 | 40 | 39 | 80 | 58 | 22 | 5 | 6 | 75 | 3 | 3 |
| W | 91 | 66 | 25 | 96 | 83 | 13 | 5 | 8 | 89 | 4 | 3 |
| X | 84 | 59 | 25 | 96 | 89 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 71 | 3 | 3 |
| Y | 92 | 53 | 39 | 95 | 86 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 79 | 3 | 3 |

Appendix J

Site C: Original Data Collection Scores

SITE C: ORIGINAL DATA COLLECTION SCORES

| Students | Writing Rubrics: Baseline | | | Writing Rubrics: Final | | | Reflections Strategies | | Portfolios | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Student Scored | Teacher Scored | Difference | Student Scored | Teacher Scored | Difference | Baseline | Final | Total | Concepts Score | Reflections Score |
| A | 97 | 80 | 17 | 100 | 90 | 10 | 4 | 7 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| B | 91 | 55 | 36 | 88 | 62 | 26 | 2 | 6 | 86 | 4 | 2 |
| C | 91 | 36 | 55 | 87 | 79 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 84 | 4 | 4 |
| D | 92 | 57 | 35 | 100 | 86 | 14 | 4 | 4 | 90 | 3 | 4 |
| E | 86 | 61 | 25 | 83 | 97 | -14 | 2 | 8 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| F | 82 | 55 | 27 | 65 | 65 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 80 | 3 | 2 |
| G | 83 | 33 | 50 | 91 | 53 | 38 | 1 | 6 | 80 | 3 | 2 |
| H | 79 | 25 | 54 | 93 | 52 | 41 | 1 | 5 | 65 | 2 | 3 |
| I | 76 | 70 | 6 | 89 | 83 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| J | 92 | 48 | 44 | 84 | 90 | -6 | 1 | 4 | 96 | 4 | 4 |
| K | 83 | 55 | 28 | 83 | 63 | 20 | 3 | 4 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| L | 80 | 41 | 39 | 91 | 67 | 24 | 2 | 4 | 83 | 3 | 3 |
| M | 88 | 51 | 37 | 91 | 54 | 37 | 1 | 2 | 51 | 2 | 1 |
| N | 83 | 29 | 54 | 88 | 88 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 87 | 3 | 3 |
| O | 79 | 51 | 28 | 97 | 88 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 92 | 4 | 4 |
| P | 97 | 54 | 43 | 95 | 80 | 15 | 1 | 8 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| Q | 79 | 63 | 15 | 82 | 62 | 20 | 2 | 6 | 72 | 3 | 2 |
| R | 91 | 38 | 53 | 91 | 67 | 24 | 2 | 5 | 43 | 2 | 1 |
| S | 92 | 61 | 31 | 95 | 82 | 13 | 2 | 5 | 79 | 3 | 3 |
| T | 50 | 25 | 25 | 91 | 80 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 58 | 2 | 2 |
| U | 84 | 47 | 37 | 74 | 85 | -9 | 4 | 8 | 94 | 3 | 4 |
| V | 84 | 62 | 22 | 78 | 90 | -12 | 2 | 5 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| W | 50 | 25 | 25 | 59 | 51 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 51 | 2 | 1 |
| X | 74 | 49 | 25 | 78 | 70 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| Y | 83 | 48 | 35 | 86 | 82 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 82 | 3 | 4 |

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